

**City of Pismo Beach**  
**Wastewater Treatment Facility**  
**San Luis Obispo County**

This is a report on problems experienced by the City of Pismo Beach with its current wastewater treatment system during the last seven years. The report also discusses the city's plan to construct an Advanced Oxidation Ditch Secondary Treatment Plant. Lastly, the report cautions the City of Pismo Beach to be cognizant of the limitations of the new plant and proposes that an evaluation of the feasibility of a tertiary water reclamation program be undertaken.

**Authority**

§925. The grand jury shall investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, or functions of the county including those operations, accounts, and records of any special legislative district or other district in the county created pursuant to state law for which the officers of the county are serving in their ex officio capacity as officers of the districts.

The investigations may be conducted on some selective basis each year, but the grand jury shall not duplicate any examination of financial statements which has been performed by or for the board of supervisors pursuant to Section 25250 of the Government Code; this provision shall not be construed to limit the power of the grand jury to investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, or functions of the county.

§925 (a). The grand jury may at any time examine the books and records of any incorporated city or joint powers agency located in the county. In addition to any other investigatory powers granted by this chapter, the grand jury may investigate and report upon the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, functions, and the method or system of performing the duties of any such city or joint powers agency and make such recommendations as it may deem proper and fit.

The grand jury may investigate and report upon the needs of all joint powers agencies in the county, including the abolition or creation of agencies and the equipment for, or the method or system of performing the duties of, the several agencies. It shall cause a copy of any such report to be transmitted to the governing body of any affected agency.

### **Method**

The information for this report was gathered from an interview with the Director of Public Works/City Engineer and a review of the following documentation furnished by the Director:

- Letter from Roger W. Briggs, Executive Officer of the California Regional Water Control Board (Central Coast Region) dated November 5, 2004
- Waste Discharge Requirements Order No. R3-2004-0051 for City of Pismo Beach Wastewater Treatment Facility (San Luis Obispo County) dated “Draft for September 10, 2004”
- Volumes No. 1 and 2, Wastewater Treatment Plant. Collection System Master Plans Final Report, February 2000 by Carollo Engineers and John L. Wallace & Associates
- Master Plan Final Report, February 2004 by Carollo Engineers and John L. Wallace & Associates
- Organization chart of Public Works/Engineering Department revised September 16, 2004

### **Narrative**

Over the past seven years the City of Pismo Beach has experienced a significant number of effluent violations and sewage spills from its collection and treatment system.

The following chronology was compiled by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board:

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|--------------------|--|
| December 8, 1998   | Cleanup & Abatement (Order No. 98-83 issued to the City requirements includes development of a Wastewater Master Plan).  |
| March 1, 2000      | City completes Wastewater Master Plan (including proposed collection system improvements and treatment facility upgrade.   |
| July 31, 2000      | Mandatory Penalty Order No. 00-059 issued for \$12,000 plus Pollution Prevention Plan.   |
| December 7, 2001   | Mandatory Penalty Order No. 01-117 issued for \$120,000.   |
| March 1, 2002      | EIR certified for wastewater treatment facility upgrade project.   |
| February 2004      | City begins construction of \$14 million wastewater treatment facility upgrade.  |
| May 14, 2004       | Mandatory Penalty Order No.R3-2004-0008 issued for \$735,000.  |
| September 10, 2004 | New National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit adopted for the City, which requires comprehensive collection system management plan by September 10, 2005. |
| October 28, 2004   | Notice of Violation regarding sewage spill and status report on collection system upgrades.  |

During this period of time the City has been operating an “Activated Sludge Secondary Treatment” Plant. Currently under construction is a replacement plant designated as an “Advanced Oxidation Ditch Secondary Treatment” plant. The new plant is projected to meet not only current wastewater treatment demand of Pismo Beach but will also have enough capacity to handle the future needs of the city at Master Plan build-out projected for 2016. The volume of wastewater requiring

treatment is projected to be 1.9 million gallons per day (with a peak capacity of 3 million gallons per day for short time periods).

As noted above, the efficiency and effectiveness of the new plant has been tailored to the build-out capacity designated in the July 1999 Draft Master Plan for Pismo Beach. Should, for some as yet unforeseen reason, the City revise its build-out housing capacity upward, it should be cognizant of the fact that little reserve capacity exists in its new Wastewater Treatment System.

### **Facts**

- A. The new Plant has been designed to match the build out capacity of the 1999 Draft Master Plan.
- B. Build out is projected for 2016 or sooner.
- C. There will be little excess capacity at build out.
- D. If the plant would have been built in 1995, when the problem was first defined, it would have had a cost of six to eight million dollars.
- E. The City has been fined \$867,000. The City has paid \$132,000 and is negotiating the rest with the Regional Water Quality Control Board.
- F. There is no water Reclamation Plan therefore, over one million gallons of treated water is discharged into the ocean every day.

### **Conclusions**

On the basis of an interview with, and a review of the pertinent documentation provided by, the Director of Public Works / City Engineer of Pismo Beach, the new “Advanced Oxidation Ditch Secondary Treatment” Plant will meet the City’s wastewater needs until approximately 2016 or until build-out (as specified in the 1999 Draft Master Plan) occurs whichever comes sooner provided that the 1999 Draft Master Plan is strictly adhered to. The city should be cognizant of limited excess sewerage treatment capacity if annexing new land and future developments not contained in the 1999 Draft Master Plan.

The idea of water reclamation was discussed with the Director who acknowledges that the concept has been advanced by other interested parties on numerous occasions. The utility of the concept appears to be severely moderated by the subsequent cost of a tertiary water treatment system. To put the matter to rest once and for all, it might be advisable to conduct an evaluation of the feasibility of a water reclamation program for the City of Pismo Beach.

### **Required Response**

This is an informational report. A formal response is not required.